

# Life is sweet for young singer from Canada

By Larry O'Connor  
staff writer

At 17, she is discovered by a record company. At 20, she releases her first album. At 21, she is about to embark on her first tour of the United States.

Sarah McLachlan, this is your life. And how sweet it seems. Young, bright and talented with the music industry vows to conquer. But the Halifax, Nova Scotia, native is keeping things in perspective.

"I guess for the people outside, things might appear to be happening fast," said McLachlan, who will perform Saturday at the Royal Oak Music Theatre. "Things don't always happen at once. They happen day by day."

Day by day, people are hearing the word about McLachlan's debut album on Arista Records, "Touch." Ethereal, classical are interwoven with well-crafted pop melodies. Progressive would be an apt description of the 10-song LP.

While some might be taken by the surreal images painted by McLachlan vocally, the astonishing thing is that she wrote most of the songs herself. Not too considering she had never even composed a song before the making of "Touch."

The process, though, wasn't without its hitches. McLachlan struggled at first, always searching for the right word or phrase to convey her mood.

"INITIALLY WHEN I went to Vancouver, the album was supposed to be a compilation between myself and other artists on Nettwerk (a



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Canadian production company) They said, 'We'll give you six months. See what you can come up with on your own.' Which freaked me out but was also fantastic at the same time. I was a little lazy at first because I wasn't sure of what I was doing."

McLachlan, though, found her mark by drawing from personal experiences as a teenager. As a result, "Touch" is an album filled with frustration, anger and happiness. She also relied on her musical experience, which has included study-

ing classical piano and guitar at the Nova Scotia Royal Conservatory of Music. She had five years of vocal training at the institution as well.

McLachlan's vocal talent is what caught the eye of one Nettwerk rep-

resentative one night in Halifax. She sang for a local band, The October Game, when they offered her a five-record deal.

Once she got the nerve to tell her parents, McLachlan headed to Vancouver to work on material for her first album. "Touch" was released on Nettwerk in October 1988 in Canada.

Arista Records signed McLachlan and released the album earlier this year in the U.S. The LP instantly found a home on alternative and college radio in this country.

SUDDENLY, McLachlan was looking at some major career decisions.

"I was very uptight about it," she said. "I want to be in control of every part of my music career."

McLachlan not only wrote and performed the songs on "Touch," but did the artwork for the cover and will be involved in the video work. Before being discovered, she was majoring in jewelry design at an art college.

With her artistic background, it should come as no surprise that Peter Gabriel is one of her biggest influences.

"He's like a god to me, I guess," she said. "He makes me feel good. When I'm depressed, I put on his music . . . It sounds stupid, but that's what a god is to a lot of people."

But such exalted status for McLachlan will undoubtedly take time. She is already working on material for her second album, which she hopes to be released in April. She's still grappling with the songwriting process.

"I don't know about everybody else, but I seem to emoter more when I'm pissed," she said. "A lot of the time the songs are bitter-sweet and cynical. But not always."

"I'm too young to be cynical."

Sarah McLachlan will open for Bruce Cockburn and Holly Near at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, July 29, at Royal Oak Music Theatre, 318 W. Fourth St. For information, call 663-4755.

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